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ANTOINE PREDOCK DEFENDS DOOMED CAL POLY POMONA TOWER



TON ZASADZINSKI

Last month, it became clear that Antoine Predock's iconic Classroom Laboratory Administration Building (CLA) on the campus of Cal Poly Pomona was likely to meet every building's nemesis: the wrecking ball. The university claims it is structurally compromised and poorly designed for education. While demolition is not yet scheduled, the California State University Board of

Trustees has voted to construct a new building in its place. Meanwhile, in an interview, Predock fired back that the CLA is not only structurally sound but an "irreplaceable" part of the campus.

"In their haste to find a quick solution to common structural problems, university officials have chosen to raze this important visual landmark and, by **continued on page 4**

MASTERPLAN FOR 150 ACRES ALONG LA RIVER STILL AWAITS GREEN LIGHT



COURTESY PERKINS + WILL

Rollin' on the River?

Over 25 years of work have culminated in a transformative blueprint for 150 acres of land in the heart of LA

abutting the famously barren Los Angeles River. However, funding and approval for the Piggyback Yard (PBy)

conceptual masterplan, as the project is called, are still nonexistent, while the land's owner, **continued on page 5**

The new observatory.



COURTESY EHDD

SF'S EXPLORATORIUM REMADE AS SUSTAINABLE LANDMARK

SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH

One of San Francisco's most beloved cultural institutions, the Exploratorium, officially unveiled the design for its new \$220 million home on October 19. The project promises to give the original hands-on science museum—which opened in 1969—a **continued on page 7**

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

LIVING WALLS ARE SPROUTING EVERYWHERE FROM CORPORATE LOGOS TO ART AT HOME. AN DIGS UP THE DETAILS. SEE PAGES 10-12

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LMS' updated look for the neighborhood library.



COURTESY LMS

LANDMARKING EFFORT FAILS TO SAVE SF'S NORTH BEACH LIBRARY

BOOK DRIVE

As strong as the preservationist sentiment is in San Francisco, it doesn't always prevail. The city's Historical Preservation Commission (HPC) flexed its muscle last October by recommending landmark status for Appleton & Wolfard's mid-century North Beach library, which had been scheduled for demolition. But on **continued on page 3**

HOUSING WITH SMARTS AND A SOUL. SEE PAGE 8



ART GRAY

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UGLY CITY

Here's an open secret. While many people—myself included—love LA dearly, most would agree that it's a pretty ugly city. Sure, the natural beauty is stunning, and many of the residential neighborhoods are gems, but the rest leaves plenty to be desired. With massive stretches of blank concrete walls, wide streets, and car-based sprawl that doesn't do much to relieve the stereotypes people have of this place, can anything make LA an attractive, more livable city?

The first step on that road would be approval of the proposed design guidelines recently put forward by the LA Planning Department. The guidelines are a checklist of smart urban ideas, including narrower, more walkable streets, activated street fronts, and more neighborhood-sensitive architecture. This is not new thinking, and much of the rules wouldn't be binding, but they're an important tool in gaining momentum for building a more livable city. Efforts to derail the proposal, which will soon go up for a vote, have come largely from groups that argue that the guidelines might spur overdevelopment. That's nonsense. There's always going to be development. It just needs to be carried out responsibly.

Beyond the guidelines, LA and the rest of California, for that matter, need to implement ideas that are more than good press opportunities. These include smart but once-a-year happenings like Parking Day LA, which replaces some of the city's parking spaces with green spaces; and CicLAvia, in which busy roads are closed to traffic in favor of walkers and bikers. San Francisco opens its streets a few more times a year with its Sunday Streets program. Other small-time efforts include the group Tree People, which trains communities to plant and care for trees.

The city needs the courage to create ongoing programs. Instead of closing streets once a year, close a few permanently. Santa Monica did this with its 3rd Street Promenade, and it's become by far that city's biggest urban attraction. New York has done so throughout the city—notably in Times Square—creating places where pedestrians feel comfortable in public, not like targets for speeding taxis. And instead of a few swaths of green, think back to an earlier time in which green pathways linked up cities and became their heart, attracting residents and investment.

We must seek every opportunity we can to enact lasting change. Here's another one: LADOT is looking for a new general manager, and already a petition is spreading to encourage the city to hire someone who looks at streets not just as a pathway from A to B for vehicles, but as a rich passage where people walk and shop and live. AIA/LA is pushing hard for an office of architecture and urban design to ensure the quality of the public realm. Efforts like these can help turn good ideas into reality, and could turn LA into a model for the next generation of urban design, not a city that its own residents are embarrassed to love.

SAM LUBELL

CALIFORNIA BALLOT MEASURES
LOOK GOOD FOR ARCHITECTS

ARCH PARTY LINE

Regardless of national electoral results, architects in California have a lot to smile about after November's election, as a number of ballot propositions went their way. Most important, Proposition 23, which aimed to suspend AB 32, the state's Global Warming Solutions Act, was trounced in a vote of 61.4 percent to 38.6 percent, preserving statewide green building funds, plus important environmental and anti-sprawl measures. The act, designed to reduce carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, promotes, among other things, green building incentives, sustainable community strategies, high-speed rail, and energy- and water-efficiency initiatives, all favorable programs for architects. The defeat of the proposition has emboldened politicians, including outgoing Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, to push for more stringent national sustainability legislation like recently stalled cap-and-trade measures.

Architects also celebrated victory with the approval of Prop. 22, which prohibits the state from taking city redevelopment funds, among other local monies, to replenish its reserves. Over the last year alone, the cash-strapped state took about \$2 billion from local agencies, and had planned to take about \$85 million over the next two years from LA's Community Redevelopment Agency. Christine Essel, the agency's CEO, told *AN* that she found such appropriation "shortsighted," and that funding goes in part to architectural projects like business loans, infrastructure, new parks, affordable housing, and private development.

Finally, the defeat of Prop. 24, while not necessarily a boon to the state, will help larger architecture firms. That proposition had called for the elimination of tax breaks for some multi-state corporations.

On some votes, however, architects lost out. Prop. 21, which would have increased vehicle license fees to help fund imperiled state parks, was defeated, and along with it a new source of work for landscape architects in particular. Meanwhile, the impact of votes for legislators was much less clear-cut. Some are fearful that the election of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom to Lieutenant Governor leaves the fate of that city uncertain, especially with the choice of his replacement in the hands of the often anti-development Board of Supervisors. On the other hand, Governor Jerry Brown and Senator Barbara Boxer have both pledged support for public budget-boosting items like high-speed rail and green technologies. **SL**

UP-AND-DOWN BILLINGS INDEX
SIGNALS JITTERY RECOVERY

BUMPY RIDE

Defying the global economic doldrums, numbers released in October by the AIA brought a jolt of hope for design firms, as billings for the industry broke into positive territory after more than two years of declines. But a follow-up report in November dashed those hopes, when the index slipped back below the important 50 mark, affirming architects' fears of a skittish recovery.

The surge in September brought the

monthly billings index to 50.4, surpassing 50 for the first time since January 2008. Even more surprising, inquiries for new projects shot up to 62.3 from 54.6, hitting their highest point since mid-2007. (Any score above 50 indicates an increase in billings or inquiries, and below 50 a decrease.)

The rise in September seemed to consolidate four straight months of increases for the index, fueling speculation that better times were on the horizon. But the bump in billings was viewed cautiously by AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker, who cited numerous factors preventing a more accelerated recovery from taking hold.

October numbers confirmed this: The

index slipped nearly two points to 48.7, and inquiries were down to 61.7. "This is disappointing news, but not that surprising," Baker said in a November 17 release. "We were anticipating a slow recovery period, and it is likely that there will be fits and starts before conditions show consistent improvement. Right now, reluctance from lending institutions to provide credit for construction projects and a sluggish economy are the main impediments to a revival."

Regionally, the West slipped two months in a row to land at 44.3 in October. The Midwest and South rose modestly to 51.8 and 48.6, respectively. The Northeast jumped to 56.7 in September before slipping to 54.5 in October.

Among the sectors, commercial and industrial work continued a streak of six straight months above 50, hitting 54.5 in October. Institutional work increased to 50.8, multifamily residential was up to 49.1, and mixed practice ended the month at 43.2.

The broad economic picture indicates that good times are still some ways off, with no major changes since September's sluggish outlook when private housing starts were up a scant 0.3 percent. The Federal Reserve cited both "continued growth" and "widespread signs of a deceleration" in economic activity—mixed messages that are familiar to architects as the industry continues its long battle back from the brink. **JEFF BYLES**

POST-CONAN CONSTRUCTION

Most of us move on from difficult breakups by eating ice cream or going on long walks. Not NBC. They build things. Now that **Conan O'Brien** has started his own show on TBS, NBC has awarded local firm IA with a commission to convert his former *Tonight Show* sound stage in Burbank into a two-story NBC newsroom. According to one of our embedded couch potatoes, the project, awarded in October, should be finished by June 2012. So basically they want to obliterate any memory of Conan? Well, yes, our source tells us, that's exactly it. Meanwhile, the company is also secretly working with Gehry Partners to redesign much of the rest of its Burbank campus. No designs have been released, but from what we've seen in private it appears to be Gehry's largest project since his catastrophic Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn and his on-ice Grand Avenue project in Downtown LA—and dwarfed only by his Abu Dhabi Guggenheim.

MAK SMACKED

Our German isn't perfect, but we read in the Austrian newspapers that **Peter Noever**, director of the MAK Center for Art and Architecture in Vienna and a member of the governing board of the MAK Center at the Schindler House in LA, is going to have to appear before a government inquiry for misappropriation of public funds for things like throwing a birthday party for his mother and leaning on the Austrian minister of culture to commission **Eric Owen Moss** for the Austrian pavilion at the Venice biennale. Moss is widely thought to have misused Austrian taxpayers' money to the tune of some \$1 million to advertise himself.

DYSFUNCTIONAL CITIES STRIKE AGAIN

Everyday dysfunctional cities like LA or San Francisco are smoothies compared to doings in Bell, California. Recently, both its mayor and city manager were led away in handcuffs on corruption charges. The city council—with several of its members accused of corruption—was literally disbanded. LA architect **Lorcan O'Herlihy** is now stuck, waiting on approval of his Pacific Charter School project and the renovation of a large foreclosed building in the city. The project will be in limbo until at least February, when the city will supposedly get a temporary decision-making body to replace the city council. Speaking of dysfunctional, West Hollywood named **Shepard Fairey** to design the public art in its almost-complete West Hollywood Library across from the Pacific Design Center. After learning of Fairey's lawsuit with the AP, however, the city got cold feet. So they released another Request for Proposals. And who is a rumored finalist? Shepard Fairey, of course! Glad they spent our tax dollars on that round-up of the more-than-usual suspects!

SEND HANDCUFFS AND "HOPE" POSTERS TO EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM

The current North Beach Library.



SAM LUBELL

BOOK DRIVE continued from front page November 9 the city's Board of Supervisors voted against landmarking the cramped library, which will now likely be replaced with a new building by local firm Leddy Maytum Stacy. The showdown was notable for several reasons, not the least of which was a demonstration of the checks and balances on the new preservation commission, which was established by voters two years ago.

At the supervisors' meeting, president David Chiu framed the issue as a disparagement of the HPC's judgment: "There's a legitimate question whether the North

Beach branch library deserves landmarking," he said. "Including buildings that lack architectural merit cheapens the historical landmark designation for other buildings." The board upheld, by a 10-to-1 vote, an earlier, unanimous decision to block the landmarking by its Land Use and Economic Development Committee.

"I think it is clearly up to the elected officials to make a decision based on other conditions and issues that they feel are important," said Charles Chase, the president of the HPC. Earlier this year, the commission declared the Fairmont's Tonga Room a historic resource, complicat-

ing the hotel's plans for a renovation. "We've taken the mantle of dealing with what is of historical value to the city, and that voice is needed for decision-makers to understand an area of value that might not be as clearly articulated," said Chase.

Meanwhile, plans for the new North Beach library have been released. Leddy Maytum Stacy's new building would provide 60 percent more space and emphasize natural lighting and accessibility to the community through glass walls, clerestory windows, and skylights. The firm also created a masterplan for the whole block, relocating the library to a parking lot across the street and reclaiming its former site as open space, creating a larger park for the city's densest neighborhood. The draft environmental impact report for the project is in the comment period, and certification of the final EIR is anticipated for the spring. It would be the last project completed in an ambitious, citywide library improvement effort initiated in 2000.

LYDIA LEE



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COURTESY KNIBB DESIGN

Bringing adaptive reuse to a whole new level, Venice architects Knibb Design have transformed a former IHOP in Culver City into one of the most anticipated new restaurants in LA. And that's not just because it will be serving food from chef Roy Choi of Kogi BBQ fame.

The firm performed a balancing act: deconstructing much of the building to create a modern new space while maintaining the original structure, a tall A-frame that most of us who have had a short stack at IHOP can relate to. The restaurant's spartan aesthetic of bleached knotty pine walls, exposed beams, and concrete floors replaces a cramped and tacky combination of painted plaster and dispiriting wall-to-wall carpet. The architects opened up the space—which never took advantage of the roof height before—and flooded it with light, thanks to a large window wall that fills out almost the entire roof envelope.

"The original building was extremely well engineered, to the point where you could just about open the entire interior," explained principal Seth Knibb. The firm added a contemporary touch by fitting the kitchen's wall on the other side with a black textured laminate surface, and converted much of the parking lot into an outdoor patio and garden. **SL**

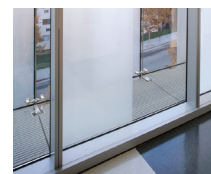
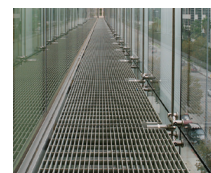


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SKID ROW HOUSING TRUST OFFICES

Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects is designing the new property management offices for Skid Row Housing Trust, a major developer of affordable and transitional housing in Los Angeles. The nonprofit is a big design client: It has hired architects like Michael Maltzan, O'Herlihy, and Koning Eizenberg for new buildings. The current project entails the

renovation of a 4,200-square-foot structure located on 7th Street and Central Avenue, including 16 office spaces. The design creates an airy new workspace, letting light in through a wall of glass blocks and opening the space up further with large sliding doors. Textured metal screens will provide intricacy. The project also highlights what O'Herlihy calls a "forest of columns," an effect created by taking the building's abundance of structural columns and skinning them with long, thin LED

lights that peel out toward the top. In contrast to many raw office and arts spaces downtown, O'Herlihy said he was trying to give employees a break from the bleakness of Skid Row with a design that is more "artful, playful, and uplifting." The project will be built on a very modest budget of about \$55 per square foot.

Architect:
Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects
Client: Skid Row Housing Trust
Location: 7th Street and Central Avenue, Los Angeles
Completion: 2011

HANDS OFF! continued from front page doing so, will demolish a vital part of the university's identity," he told *AN*.

Designed in 1993 to be what Predock called "a pivotal, landmark building," the CLA is composed of an eight-story triangular tower and an attached rectilinear structure. The tower is visible from the I-10 freeway and doubles as a wayfinding device on campus, helping visitors move through a school that University President Michael Ortiz calls "difficult to navigate." The structure has been featured in films and is even integrated into the university's logo. Its presence will not be easily replicated.

While Ortiz admits that "the removal of the CLA will leave a void in the skyline," he contends that "those who have to interact with the structure on a daily basis are not as fond of the structure." The building, administrators argue, is confusing to navigate, cramped, and plagued with problems. According to Mike Sylvester, Cal Poly's vice president of facilities, the university was forced to pursue "a latent defect claim for design and construction deficiencies" shortly after the building opened, due to extensive water damage. That damage, he said, has still not been completely fixed.

Renovating the building would mean updating it for new seismic codes, among other things, and the university says it would cost \$80 million, the same price they have estimated for a new building.

Predock, who completed his plans for the building under the supervision of a California State University review board, is understandably upset by the news. "It is devastating," he said, "to imagine that this iconic

structure, one of the most important of my designs, might be demolished, creating a void in the Cal Poly campus fabric, an irreplaceable loss."

Responding to the administration's charges, Predock defended the CLA's structural and figural integrity, calling his building "a project of which I am extremely proud...not to mention the fact that the structure survived both the Northridge and Chino Hills earthquakes unscathed." He added that the school itself signed off on the building's design. "During the construction drawing phase, the project underwent intense scrutiny by the university and its peer review panel," he said, "continuing into the construction phase with a team of university inspectors."

Sylvester differs with Predock about the university's oversight of his work. "Although there were reviews during the development of the project, the liability for design and construction is the architect's, engineer's, and contractor's professional responsibility," he said.

Around campus, reaction to the impending loss seems muted, while local preservation groups have been mum. Said Sylvester: "There are many people in the university community that are disappointed that the building may be demolished, but overall, most people agree with the university's decision and are looking forward to a new replacement facility."

Construction on the CLA's successor is estimated to begin in 2013, and will take approximately 18 to 24 months to complete. An architect for the project has not yet been named. **ANYA RAVITZ**

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ROLLIN' ON THE RIVER? continued from front page the Union Pacific Railroad, is still hesitant to part with it.

In 2009, the nonprofit Friends of the Los Angeles River found four architecture and landscape firms—Michael Maltzan Architecture, Mia Lehrer + Associates, Perkins + Will, and Chee Salette Architecture Office—to work pro bono on the Piggyback plan, targeting the railroad yards located at the critical junction of downtown Los Angeles, Lincoln Heights, and Boyle Heights. The firms, known as the PBy Collaboration, met biweekly until late May 2010. Now the group is initiating a dialogue with city leaders, public and private agencies, and the community.

Although the city's Los Angeles River Revitalization masterplan, which was started in 2005, has moved forward with bike lanes and small park projects along the river's length, the PBy masterplan is the first sizable effort, said Mia Lehrer + Associates designer Hong Joo Kim. The plan includes 125 acres of land and 25 acres of riverbed. The Piggyback Yard, otherwise known as the Los Angeles Transfer Container Facility, is the largest single-owner property adjacent to the river, and hence, the yard's proponents suggest, the only place a single, large-scale project could work.

The PBy Collaboration proposes to replace the river's concrete bottom with a soft riverbed, reintroduce plants and wildlife, and set the stage for educational, cultural, commercial, health care, and minor industrial buildings. The midsize structures would include green roofs and photovoltaic panel arrays. Building vertically means more space for the proposed 130-acre public park, which would include soccer fields, sports amenities, walking and biking paths, and a botanical garden.

The plan is to build an area where mixed-income residents would live, work, and play, increasing vitality and decreasing crime. The project would "bridge, through architecture and landscape design, the gap between isolated neighborhoods and districts," said Jessica Varner, an architect from Michael Maltzan Architecture.

Mia Lehrer emphasized that the PBy plan is "an ongoing investigation" of the yard, with several private and public agencies involved. Some of these include the county, city, and California High Speed Rail. But

even with such backing, the collaboration's hands are still tied, since Union Pacific (UP) owns almost all of the land in the masterplan. It uses the Piggyback Yard to transfer containers to and from trains and trucks.

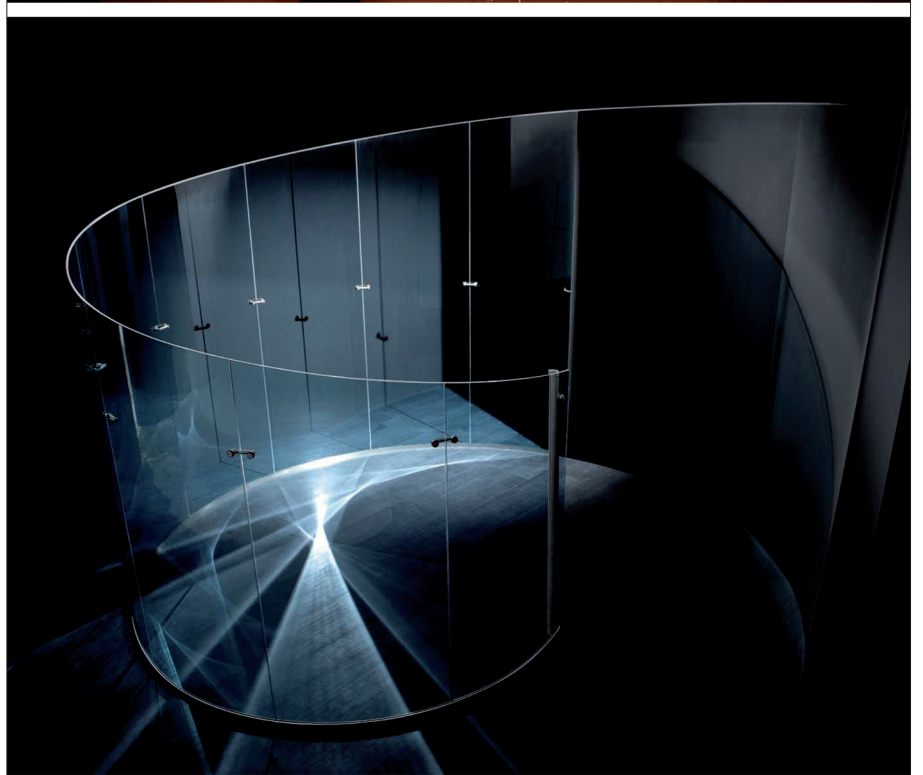
Union Pacific acknowledged the yard is operating below capacity, but Lupe Valdez, the company's director of public policy and community affairs, partially blamed the economy, adding that UP was worried about giving up the valuable property. "It is the last yard UP has in the city of Los Angeles, and we realize we could never get it back once gone because of cost and current environmental requirements," Valdez said. She added that the yard is being used night and day by 50 to 100 workers at a time, not including truck drivers.

Others note that while retaining jobs in this recession is important, more jobs would be created than lost if this working blueprint—which would take about 20 years to complete—were implemented. Architect Leigh Christy from Perkins + Will said work could be realized piecemeal through "capitalizing on efforts already in place." The Army Corps of Engineers, for example, has funding to complete the Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study by 2012. Part of the area being studied for restoration and flood control is a stretch of river adjacent to the PBy. Meanwhile, the city's Clean Tech and BioMed Tech Corridors and California High Speed Rail all have funding to perform work on or around the PBy area. The PBy Collaboration needs to sway these organizations to work in tune with its masterplan, which cannot be realized without eventually purchasing the yard from Union Pacific.

A small piece of the plan, the Mission Road corridor, is almost free of UP ownership. This portion of Mission Road, which lies between Cesar Chavez Avenue and Main Street, is about one mile of arterial roadway lined by commercial or industrial buildings. The PBy Collaboration has been talking to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and various city council and city planning members to start work on this area, said Christy. The project could become a "new model for the densification of the city," said Marc Salette of Chee and Salette Architecture Office, and could jumpstart the rest of the PBy masterplan.

ZEN VUONG

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HOUSE OF THE ISSUE> STEVEN EHRLICH ARCHITECTS



GRANT WUDFORD

Inglewood, California is notorious for its high crime rates and low housing standards, but Steven Ehrlich, an architect with 30 years of experience, insists that the near-coastal city is “yet to be discovered.” And he’s bet over a quarter of a million dollars on its up-and-coming status with its proximity to Los Angeles International Airport, to beaches, and to neighborhoods like Culver City and Marina Del Rey.

In 2009, Ehrlich purchased a Rudolf Schindler house on Inglewood’s Ellis Avenue for \$265,000. Schindler built three modern residences on the

block of otherwise conventional homes. The 1940 house was in disrepair: Metal capping topped the stucco building; dirty fiberglass shaded the front and back porch; tired oak floors creaked; walls slouched. But Ehrlich saw the potential for a new home for his daughter, her husband, and their toddler.

Ehrlich derived inspiration from Schindler’s Kings Road house and tried to stay true to the modern master’s vision. Yet, he said, “If Schindler were working today, he would take full advantage of current building technologies rather than freeze the home

in time.” So although Ehrlich put in a replica of the oak flooring, skimmed layers of paint off the original brick fireplace, kept most of the cabinet and closet doors, and cloned a built-in desk, he also demolished cabinets that closed in the small kitchen and fitted the kitchen and bathroom with modern amenities. He removed asbestos ducts; made the house more green by insulating the walls, roof, and floor with recycled paper and denim fill, where there had been no insulation at all; put in tempered glass windows; and introduced heating

and AC into the outdated modern masterpiece.

Ehrlich built an L-shaped galvanized steel trellis in the backyard patio that mimics the one found atop Schindler’s Kings Road House. He said he trained a 70-year-old grape vine to climb up the trellis and provide shade. Just as Kings Road is really two combined buildings, Ehrlich and his neighbor united their front yards and put in drought-resistant ground covering rather than traditional grass. He kept some of the original aloe plants and created a little seating area where residents of the conjoined houses

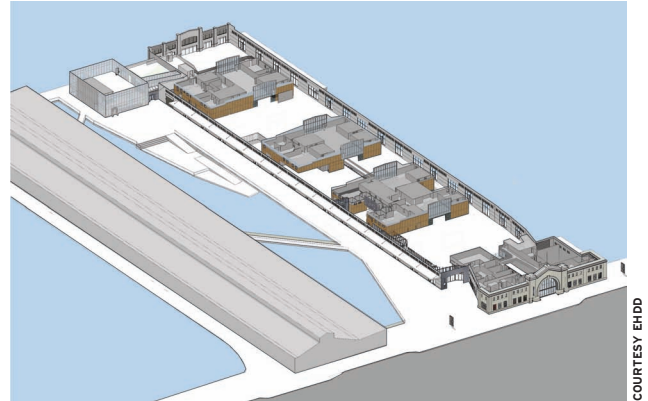
could convene. To further the illusion of two attached Schindler buildings, and to hide garbage cans from public view, Ehrlich used a translucent fiberglass and acrylic panel to cover the gap between the two homes.

Walking around the renovated 981-square-foot home, it is hard to conjure up images of urban decay. In fact, the neighborhood security guard keeps a close eye on visitors meandering down the block to take pictures of the three Schindler homes on Ellis Avenue—now three of the city’s architectural gems.

ZV

Clockwise from top left: The front yard’s drought-resistant vegetation is still growing in; a view of the dilapidated house; the rear facade and a new trellis inspired by Schindler’s Kings Road House; new beams outside the entry; the living and dining areas feature new floors, woodwork, and finishes to complement the original fireplace and framing; a small utilitarian kitchen.

New life for the old warehouse at Pier 15. Right: The interior has galleries surrounded by generous open space.



COURTESY EHDD

SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH
continued from front page
significantly higher public profile in a prominent, more accessible location on the waterfront. It will also be a landmark of sustainability, as the city's largest net-zero building and potentially the largest net-zero museum in the world.

"This move really multiplies our impact," said Dennis

Bartels, executive director of the Exploratorium. "We get to move out of our cave at the Palace of Fine Arts and come into the light."

The architecture firm in charge of the design is EHDD, best known for another waterfront building: the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which set a new standard for aquarium design in its open layout and connection to the outdoors.

For the Exploratorium's new home at Pier 15, on the city's northern waterfront at Embarcadero and Green streets, the architects are hoping to advance museum design in other ways, albeit within the constraints of an adaptive reuse of a historic 1915 warehouse. They took advantage of the structure's long roof space to spec 1.4 megawatts of solar panels,

which will supply more electricity than the building uses. The museum will also be among the first to implement a heat-exchange system that uses bay water for heating and cooling the building. Rainwater will be stored in a 300,000-gallon cistern for non-potable uses. These and other sustainability measures should qualify the building for LEED Gold.

Within the lofty, skylit steel structure—which doubles the museum's indoor square footage—the firm concentrated on retaining the openness of the warehouse while providing dedicated spaces for museum programs. Four enclosed galleries feature clerestory windows, while a long central nave provides views from the front through to the water. Loading dock doors on both sides will also be opened to bring in additional light.

The main contemporary moment is a two-story glass observatory at the end of the pier, which will be visible from the road. With a ground-floor restaurant and exhibit space above, the observatory will offer a dramatic panorama

of the urban skyline to the west and the bay to the east. The structure also frames the end of the Exploratorium's new 25,000-square-foot outdoor exhibit area, which will let the museum use what is directly on hand—wind, sun, and tide—to explain natural phenomena to kids.

"I think this could be the Monterey Bay Aquarium of the next century—the new science museum," said EHDD principal Marc L'Italien. Besides offering a major public presence, the new location also provides for future expansion into the warehouse on Pier 17, giving the institution plenty of room to grow. The new museum is expected to be completed in late 2012.

LL



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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 1, 2010



Clockwise from top left: Laser-cut aluminum panels provide protection and offbeat variety; solar panels act as a shady trellis; the bamboo-filled courtyard; linear light fixtures in the courtyard; units have large glass window walls.



In this world of rampant NIMBYism, it's rare that a 42-unit building reserved for low-income, physically disabled residents could be considered an asset to a community. But such is the case with Patrick Tighe Architecture's new Sierra Bonita Apartments along Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood.

The building, which also contains the offices for the developer West Hollywood Community Housing, somehow manages to be beautiful, cheaply built (it cost \$14 million), energy-efficient, and low-impact, all at the same time. And while most low-income

housing maintains an institutional look full of splashy colors and other gimmicks that cover up cheapness and often lend a patronizing air, these units don't feel low-income at all. In fact, despite their small size and simplicity, they have an air of sophistication that explains why they've attracted a list of about 3,000 applicants for their 42 spots.

The 50,000-square-foot building gets its edgy design motif from what was at first an imperfection. Because of the structure's unusual width-to-height ratio, its chevron-like brace frames—which are most apparent outside the central

courtyard, where they are covered in colorful fiberglass panels—had to be built with an off-center geometric pattern, known as an eccentric brace frame, that looks like a series of intersecting shards. Those forms are echoed in several aspects of the building. The front facade, for instance, is clad with aluminum panels laser cut with the same pattern. The panels not only give the building a distinctive presence on the boulevard, but they provide sun shading and privacy. The street-facing units, also clad in gray stucco, are arranged in a three-dimensional pattern in which

some stay flush with the building and some jut out, creating even more visual rhythm.

On the building's ground floor, office spaces are modest but comfortable and contemporary. Ceiling fins made of recycled paper lend an affordable but splashy touch, as do curving niches, walls, and ceilings. Meanwhile, the units themselves are comfortable and have an edgy feel, thanks to concrete floors and fragmented views through the metallic screens over their large window walls. Those along the courtyard have their own porches with built-in benches, for enjoying the superb quality of the building's enclosed exterior space.

Indeed, the courtyard is the jewel of the project. Unlike some affordable housing developments, whose courtyards feel too exposed, loud, and blown-out with sunlight, this one feels like a sheltered escape. Tighe describes it as a "bamboo forest," largely a function of the protective bamboo trees that will grow up to 60 feet tall. The eccentric brace pattern is again on display through the courtyard's shard-like pathways, which help break up the space and make it feel even more intimate. And the peaceful area has an edge thanks to tall, polycarbonate-covered light tubes, along with built-in benches and Cor-ten steel planters.

Atop the building, two roof terraces provide residents with still more escapes from noisy West Hollywood city life, as well as great views of the neighbor-

hood and beyond. Vines growing on a network of terraces soften these areas, and photovoltaics provide a shady canopy. These solar panels are part of a system of green elements that also includes low-impact building materials, natural airflow, passive solar design, native landscaping, and a solar water heater.

In all, Sierra Bonita is an inspiring piece of architecture in an affordable housing sector that still mostly expects mediocrity, with clients and contractors that are used to cutting corners. "It's hard not to do the typical thing," said Tighe, who notes that despite an exceptional client, he had to stay on site most of the time to make sure the contractors carried out his plans. "But we made sure it was something special." **SL**



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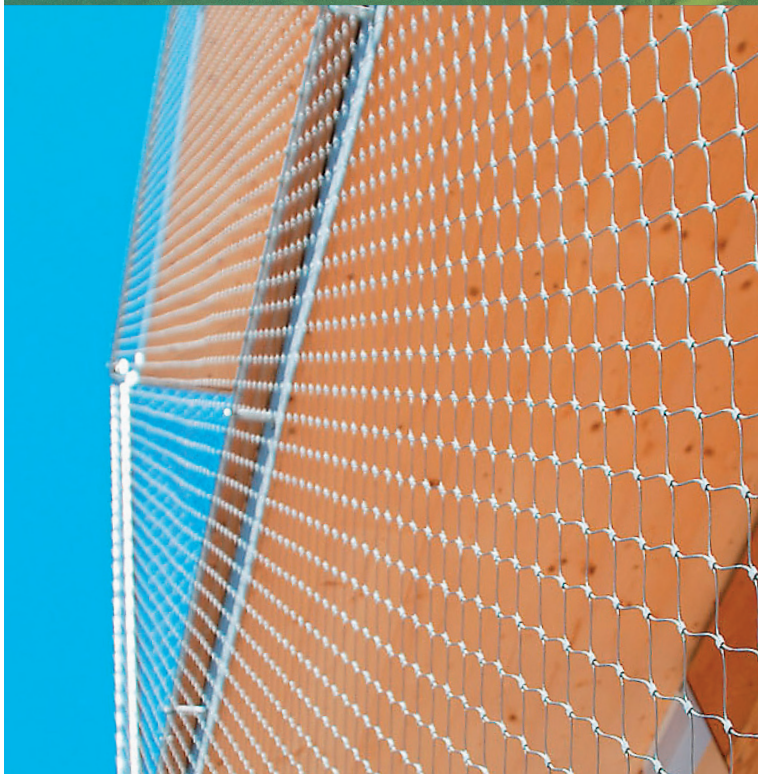
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Architect Seth Boor and plant maven Flora Grubb take a collaborative, grassroots approach to vertical gardening in San Francisco.

By Joanne Furio

CLIMBING THE WALLS

Clockwise from left: Boor Bridges' installation at the Ames Cottage packs several plant types into a small space; a planted panel at Bardessono Hotel in Yountville; Patrick Blanc's installation at the Caixa Forum in Madrid; Blanc's rendering of a covered wall for San Francisco's Drew School.

Creating an irrigated stone planting system among terraces and windows, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon triumphed over soil, water, weight, gravity, and erosion, a feat so spectacular that it became one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Two thousand years later, architects are still striving to incorporate the demands of plants into architecture, with results almost as dazzling.

In San Francisco, where a Mediterranean climate creates a conducive environment for growing a staggering array of plants, interest in vertical gardens, or green walls, has gone viral. Earlier this year, the worldwide master of the form, Patrick Blanc—known for vertical gardens at the Quai Branly Museum in Paris and the Caixa Forum in Madrid, among other installations—created a stir when he arrived in the city to begin work on the largest vertical garden in the U.S., a 1,700-square-foot growing wall at the new Drew School. Shortly afterward, following the opening of an AIA San Francisco photo exhibit on vertical gardens, landscape architect Andrea

Cochran received so many inquiries from architects she “couldn’t count them.” The AIA exhibit proved popular enough that the chapter extended it another two weeks and added a lecture on the subject for Earth Day.

Amid this explosion of interest in the subject, architect Seth Boor of San Francisco-based Boor Bridges, and Flora Grubb, owner of the eponymous San Francisco nursery that’s a favorite of design types, have completed several such gardens, albeit on a small scale showing what’s possible with planted walls. Their collaboration also represents an example of the new relationships architects will need to have with plant experts to see their ideas through to fruition.

“It’s this idea of aesthetic alchemy, taking these forgotten spaces that don’t have value and turning them into something completely different and completely alive,” said Boor. He can see why his colleagues are intrigued: Vertical gardens are a way to transform and re-naturalize the urban environment. “We have

become accustomed to think we cannot have plants in the urban condition,” he said, “and when we know we can, we start imagining them everywhere.”

After designing Grubb’s Bayview shop in 2007, Boor collaborated with Grubb again during the remodeling of the Ames Cottage, a private residence in San Francisco. Outside the 840-square-foot home, Boor carved out a 4.5-by-12-foot area that was surrounded by buildings on three sides, yet surprisingly well lit. The space recalls “these little left-over outdoor spaces like light wells and courtyards that are so commonplace in San Francisco,” Boor explained. With a patio in mind, he raised the grade with a wooden deck, then had it covered in inexpensive slate. French doors continued the garden-like feel.

Originally, Boor envisioned a planter box containing a simple stand of bamboo growing up the wall. A traditional in-ground garden was deemed unsuitable because “we couldn’t have stuff blowing in,” Grubb said. “We needed it

to look tight and not produce any mess.” Then Boor remembered the succulent wreaths he had seen at Grubb’s shop during the holidays. The low-water plants do not require much soil and have a beautiful sculptural profile.

To create what is essentially a vertical flower pot, 20-inch plastic panels from the Canadian company ELT were inserted into a 60-by-40-inch wooden frame constructed by Grubb’s husband, Kevin Smith, the cottage’s general contractor. The frame was made from water-proofed plywood on a French cleat, creating a space between the wall that could accept an irrigation line. As the plants grew in, the plastic panels disappeared, while the more appealing wooden frame remained.

Pleased with their success, Boor, Grubb, and Smith later created an 80-by-60-inch garden, again using succulents, which hangs on an exterior wall at Grubb’s shop. Last year, the architect and plantswoman were asked to construct four living wall panels at the entrance to Bardessono, a sustainable luxury

hotel in the Napa County town of Yountville, a few months before its opening. (The tradition of using cut flowers at the entry wasn’t considered advisable for a hotel applying for LEED Platinum status.) The only criteria: No irrigation or drainage could be utilized.

Grubb ended up choosing several varieties of tillandsia, a type of air plant, which only require light and an occasional misting. Boor had them mounted on a peg system against a backdrop of rusted steel, which had been used elsewhere in the hotel. Again, Smith did the fabrication.

In another variation on the theme, Grubb installed a vertical garden on her own last year using the Woolly Pocket system at the San Francisco women’s boutique Shotwell. Woolly Pockets allows for a more horizontal gardening experience, thereby expanding the variety of plants that can be used.

As their projects demonstrate, the architectural-horticultural collaboration usually works with the architect in charge of the structural masterplan, while the plant



COURTESY RESPECTIVE FIRMS

person focuses on the garden design, although Grubb said there's "a lot of back and forth." One result is that the two have learned the quirks of each other's professions. Grubb observes that architects often envision greenery in a space, but don't want to commit much square footage to it. "That's part of why architects are so excited about this," she said. "Suddenly their dreams have come true."

For his part, Boor said architects are keen on learning the requirements of vertical gardening and are happy to collaborate. "The interesting part is giving up a little bit of the control you have over the aesthetic to incorporate something other than your original idea."

Over the past year, Grubb has fielded numerous inquiries about such gardens, but once architects discover the price (over \$100 a square foot) and the light requirements, many never take root. Nevertheless, demand has continued to grow. Recent projects include a living wall for biotech giant Genentech and a light court wall

for a four-unit building in San Francisco's Pacific Heights. The team is also installing quirky planters near the corner of Castro and Market streets, part of the city's Pavement to Parks program.

Plant selection is key. "Not every kind of plant will grow in a small plastic cell on the wall," Grubb noted. And products also have a ways to go to catch up with the demand. "Many aren't very good ideas for plants" and are "ugly plastic trays," she observed of available planting system options. Indeed, the reason Patrick Blanc's large-scale vertical gardens are so successful, she said, is because they are hydroponic.

Boor and Grubb continue to explore other plants that might submit to green wall conditions, and other structures that can expand the expressive range of vertical gardens. "Within a year, we'll come up with something new and different," Grubb said.

BAY AREA-BASED WRITER JOANNE FURIO IS A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO AN.

A BUMPER CROP OF URBAN FARMS

Down in Los Angeles, another group is producing green walls in places you'd never expect. Urban Farming, a nonprofit founded in Detroit that builds gardens in economically depressed locations across the country, has built a vertical farm at the Weingart Center, a homeless shelter on LA's Skid Row. Working with New York-based Elmslie Osler Architect, the group created a strikingly colorful wall mounted on a system of cellular metallic trays manufactured by Green Living Technologies. These are filled with soil and drip irrigated, sprouting broccoli, mustard greens, strawberries, tomatoes, and chilis, to name just a few. Shelter residents help with upkeep and use the produce at the Weingart Center's cafe.

"It's a really nice thing to come upon what used to be an empty lot and see this really green, lush thing growing food right in front of you," said Meg Glasser, California Supervisor for Urban Farming. Other benefits of the wall include cooling the building by absorbing heat, and making gardens available to people who may be physically unable to get down on their hands and knees to farm. "It's faster, easier, much more accessible," Glasser said.

Other Urban Farming walls in Los Angeles are located at the LA Regional Food Bank and the Miguel Contreras Learning Complex, and the group's most recent wall, completed this May, is along the back wall of Homeboy Industries, a company in Chinatown that gives opportunities to troubled kids. That project, which provides food to Homeboy's restaurant, is made with a lightweight fabric system of soil-containing cubbies produced by LA-based Woolly Pockets. Such hanging systems are cheaper and easier to install than most, and have built-in moisture barriers to help protect furniture, making them easily suitable for indoor walls. Other Woolly Pockets systems have been installed at LA architect Barbara Bestor's house in Silver Lake and at event space SmogShoppe in Culver City.

Manufacturer Green Living Technologies, headquartered in Rochester, New York, says it has produced more green walls than any other firm: 120,000 to 150,000 square feet of them, according to company founder George Irwin. The firm offers a training program for both contractors and architects to become certified installers. And they've created their realistic, often artistic, compositions in other challenging settings: from the underside of angled walls to the sides of skyscrapers, including the largest green wall in the world, outside the headquarters of PNC Bank in Pittsburgh.

Meanwhile, Urban Farming will continue to add vertical farms, which seem to have evergreen appeal. "They're always changing and evolving based on the seasons and the plantings," said Glasser. "You're always going to have different colors and different textures."

SAM LUBELL IS AN'S WEST COAST EDITOR.

Clockwise from top: Woolly Pockets' installation at SmogShoppe in Culver City; its wall outside Homeboy Industries; Green Living Technologies' wall at a New York condominium; the firm's large-scale installation at the PNC Bank headquarters in Pittsburgh.

GREEN SCREEN SYSTEMS RESOURCES:

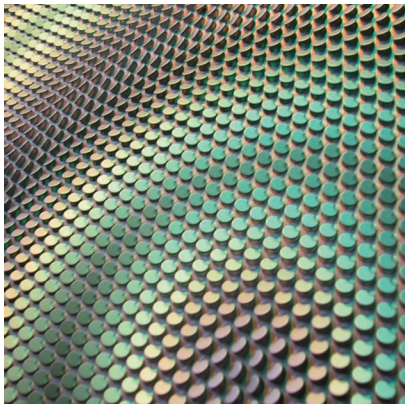
ELT Easy Green
www.eltlivingwalls.com

Green Living Technologies
www.agreenroof.com

Jakob Rope Systems
www.jakob.ch/729

Woolly Pocket System
www.woollypocket.com

1



7



6



2



3



4



5

OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE

FROM THE LATEST IN MATERIAL SCIENCE COMES INNOVATIVE CLADDING FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY ADVANCED FACADES BY JENNIFER K. GORSCHKE

1 DRI-DESIGN WITH OMBRAE DRI-DESIGN

When combined with 100 percent recyclable architectural metal panels from Dri-Design, Ombrae Imaging Technology eliminates the need for painted or printed graphics by calculating the optimal reflective position of each pixel in an image. Sheet metal is processed with CNC machining to create optical tiles that can be used over an entire facade, allowing it to shade interiors while also displaying art on the exterior. www.dri-design.com

2 CI-GIRT KNIGHT WALL

The new CI-Girt rain screen system from Knight Wall allows continuous rigid insulation to be installed on a building's exterior, increasing the structure's energy efficiency and reducing the risk of condensation. The system is adaptable to any facade or cladding system. By attaching to the building on top of the insulation, the product reduces labor and materials required to cut and fit insulation around standard girts. www.knightwallsystems.com

3 ENERGY SAVING GLASS BLOCK SEVES

Seves Energy Saving glass block uses a patented technology to introduce a low-e glass plate between the two sides of the block and then inject Argon gas into the shell, cutting the thermal transmittance value of the block in half. Though invisible, the low-e plate changes the block's reflective properties, improving heat retention in cold weather and preventing solar gain in warm weather. www.seves.com

4 LIFEWALL AND BIONICTILE CERACASA

Tile of Spain-branded manufacturer Ceracasa has introduced two complementary products designed to create air-purifying facades in urban environments. Bionictile, available in four colors and two formats, is a ceramic product that decomposes nitrogen oxide pollution in the air. When combined with Lifewall, a system of 1-meter-square facade panels that can hold any type of vegetation, the panels work symbiotically to clean outdoor air. www.ceracasa.com

5 VIVIX FORMICA CORPORATION

Interior laminate manufacturer Formica has introduced its first exterior-grade product to the U.S. market. Vivix is a rigid, homogenous flat panel available in a variety of wood-grain patterns and colors that is affixed to facades with a custom-engineered rainscreen system. Manufactured in Quebec, the panels may contribute to LEED credits for optimized energy performance, sustainable materials and resources, and moisture regulation. www.formica.com

6 ECOCLAD KLIPTECH

Made from 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper/wood fiber and bamboo fiber, surface manufacturer KlipTech's EcoClad surface is bound with water-based co-polymer resin, giving it durability while allowing it to contribute to several LEED credits. Manufactured in three U.S. locations, the panels are available in a range of wood-grain and matte color finishes, with customization available for orders as small as 30 panels. www.kliptech.com

7 BIO-LUMINUM COVERINGSETC

Aluminum parts salvaged from airplane graveyards and military sites are recycled into CoveringsETC's new Bio-Luminum tiles, 100 percent recycled and recyclable tiles that can be used for a range of interior and exterior applications. The reclaimed material is melted into blocks and sliced like quarried stone, resulting in tiles with varying textures that can be sealed and affixed to facades with 3M VHB tape. www.coveringsetc.com

DECEMBER

WEDNESDAY 1
LECTURES
Chi-Hsin Shao
Mass Transit in Taipei
12:30 p.m.
SPUR Urban Center
654 Mission St., San Francisco
www.spur.org

Maria T. Ciprazo
U.S. General Services Administration:
The Work In Our Region and the Associated Challenges We Face
8:00 a.m.
AECOM Design
515 South Flower St.
Los Angeles
www.aialosangeles.org

SYMPOSIUM
Imminent Danger:
Earthquake Disaster and Risk Reduction in U.S. Cities
8:00 a.m.
UCLA
CNSI Building
570 Westwood Plaza
Los Angeles
www.eqsymposium.com

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Bull.Miletic
Gallery Paule Anglim
14 Geary St., San Francisco
www.gallerypauleanglim.com

Y Not Yellow?
Artamo Gallery
11 West Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara
www.artamogallery.com

THURSDAY 2
EXHIBITION OPENING
Justin Limoges
Chocolate Fountain
Unspeakable Projects
735 Tehama St.
San Francisco
unspeakableprojects.com

FRIDAY 3
EXHIBITION OPENING
Bryan Cunningham,
Bruce Eichelberger,
Tom Haney, et al.
Billy Shire Fine Arts
5790 Washington Blvd.
Culver City
www.billyshirefinearts.com

SATURDAY 4
LECTURE
David Alan Brown
Raphael Discovers Leonardo
4:00 p.m.
Norton Simon Museum
411 West Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena
www.nortonsimon.org

EVENT
Association for Women in Architecture Foundation
Annual Holiday Party
Scholarship Fundraiser
6:30 p.m.
HOK
9530 Jefferson Blvd.
Culver City
www.awa-la.org

SUNDAY 5
EXHIBITION OPENING
Decolonizing Architecture
Roy and Edna Disney/
CalArts Theater
631 West 2nd St.
Los Angeles
www.redcat.org

EVENT
Urban Hike: Eagle Rock
11:00 a.m.
Location TBA
Los Angeles
www.aplusd.org

MONDAY 6
LECTURE
Carrie Byles and Mark Sarkisian
Rediscover the City: The Intersection of Sustainability and High Performance Design
6:00 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St., San Francisco
www.aiasf.org

TUESDAY 7
LECTURE
Sharon Gamson Danks
Schoolyards Reimagined: An Inspiring Look at Schoolground Innovation Around the World
6:00 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St.
San Francisco
www.aiasf.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Gesture: Hand
Drawings by Architects
George Lawson Gallery
49 Geary St.
San Francisco
www.georgelawsongallery.com

WEDNESDAY 8
EXHIBITION OPENING
Nigel Cooke
Blum & Poe
2727 South La Cienega Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.blumandpoe.com

THURSDAY 9
LECTURES
Wu Hung
From East Village to New Photography: Experimental Photography in 1990s China
7:00 p.m.
J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

Chris Poland
Building Disaster Resilient Communities
1:00 p.m.
AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St.
San Francisco
www.aiasf.org

SYMPOSIUM
Green California Schools Summit
9:00 a.m.
Pasadena Convention Center
236 West Mountain St.
Pasadena
www.green-technology.org

EVENTS
Crossing the Luxury of Private Office to Open Plan
5:00 p.m.
AT&T Center
1150 South Olive St.
Los Angeles
www.tangraminteriors.com

LAXART 5-Year Anniversary Holiday Party
7:00 p.m.
LAXART
2640 South La Cienega Blvd.
www.laxart.org

FRIDAY 10
SYMPOSIUM
California Environmental Quality Act: Legal Issues, Mitigation, and Case Studies
9:00 a.m.
SPUR Urban Center
654 Mission St.
San Francisco
www.californiapreservation.org

SATURDAY 11
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Jorge Albertella and Gerardo Hacer
Face to Face on Metal
ADC Contemporary Art Gallery
1330 Factory Pl.
Los Angeles
adcontemporaryartgallery.com

The Date Farmers
ACE Gallery
5514 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles
www.acegallery.net

SUNDAY 12
LECTURE
Face to Face: Judy Chicago on Frida Kahlo
4:00 p.m.
Contemporary Jewish Museum
736 Mission St.
San Francisco
www.thecjm.org

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Suprasensorial: Experiments in Light, Color, and Space
Geffen Contemporary
152 North Central Ave.
Los Angeles
www.moca.org

Emily Roysdon / MATRIX 235
Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
2621 Durant Ave.
Berkeley
www.bampfa.berkeley.edu

WITH THE KIDS
Art Center for Kids Open House
4:00 p.m.
Art Center College of Design
1700 Lida St., Pasadena
www.artcenter.edu

MONDAY 14
EVENTS
2010 Southern California Development Forum Design Awards
7:15 a.m.
LUXE Hotel
11462 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.scdf.org

Peace, Love, Open Bar
The Annual AIA/LA Interiors Committee Holiday Party
6:00 p.m.
5968 Washington Blvd.
Culver City
www.aialosangeles.org

WEDNESDAY 15
LECTURE
Peter Greenaway
New Possibilities: Cinema and Art History
7:00 p.m.
J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

THURSDAY 16
LECTURE
Conversations with Artists: Yunhee Min on Blinky Palermo
7:30 p.m.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.lacma.org

EXHIBITION OPENING
Robert Brady: New Work
Braunstein/Quay Gallery
430 Clementina St.
San Francisco
www.bquayartgallery.com

EVENT
Flood Tide: Remixed
7:00 p.m.
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego
700 Prospect St., La Jolla
www.mcasd.org

SATURDAY 18
EXHIBITION OPENING
Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World
The Bowers Museum
2002 North Main St.
Santa Ana
www.bowers.org

SUNDAY 26
WITH THE KIDS
Family Playhouse: Wishing Tree
1:00 p.m.
Autry National Center of the American West
Griffith Park Campus
4700 Western Heritage Way
Los Angeles
www.autrynationalcenter.org

JANUARY

SATURDAY 8
EXHIBITION OPENINGS
Gardar Eide Einarsson
Honor Fraser
1337 Abbot Kenney Blvd.
Venice
www.honorfraser.com

Roger Herman
Christian Cummings
Jancar Gallery
3875 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1308
Los Angeles
www.jancargallery.com

TUESDAY 11
LECTURE
Susan Macdonald
Sustainability and Heritage in a World of Change
7:00 p.m.
J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.
Los Angeles
www.getty.edu

THURSDAY 13
LECTURE
Nigel McGilchrist
A Formative Landscape (or Why the Greek Islands are of Such Importance to Us)
7:30 p.m.
J. Paul Getty Villa
17985 Pacific Coast Hwy.
Pacific Palisades
www.getty.edu

SATURDAY 22
EXHIBITION OPENING
Roberto Cuoghi
Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
www.hammer.ucla.edu



DOUG AITKEN
Regen Projects
633 Almont Drive, Los Angeles
Through December 18

Los Angeles artist Doug Aitken's film *House* and its accompanying installation at Regen Projects offers an existential take on architecture amid the maelstrom of modern life. The film depicts the artist's parents sitting at a table in Aitken's own house, gazing steadily at one another as the structure crumbles around them. The cause of this slow-motion destruction is never revealed, but perhaps that's the point. Presented on double monitors in a room filled with wooden debris, the video's impact is heightened as viewers contemplate the choreography of destruction, and perhaps their own provisional place within the cosmos. The exhibit also features an experimental lightbox and a new photograph derived from Aitken's video, as well as what the artist refers to as "living words." Made up of letter-shaped forms of clear plastic and white acrylic—in this case, spelling out the word "sex"—they're filled with moss and other plant life, whose dangling tendrils add a hothouse counterpoint to the wreckage around them.



BILL FONTANA
SONIC SHADOWS
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
151 3rd Street, San Francisco
Through October 16, 2011

Commissioned for SFMOMA's 75th anniversary, Bill Fontana's site-specific sound sculpture *Sonic Shadows* uses the building's circular skylight and pedestrian bridge to create "an acoustic translation of the physical space." Exploring the in-situ sounds of a place marks a new direction for the artist, whose works typically relocate sounds from one location to another, as in his *Sound Sculptures through the Golden Gate* (1987) that brought sounds from bridge-mounted microphones to SFMOMA's former Van Ness Avenue building. In *Sonic Shadows*, an assemblage of ultrasound beams, hypersonic speakers, and vibration sensors offers each visitor a unique interaction with the work. According to the museum, narrowly focused ultrasound beams from four speakers reflect off the turret walls, and are audible on the bridge and encircling staircases to create a dynamic auditory experience. In addition to responding to noises in that area of the structure, the sensors also integrate ambient sounds from both in and outside the building that are recorded in real time.

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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 1, 2010

INSIDE STORY

*Handcrafted Modern:
At Home With Mid-Century Designers*
Leslie Williamson
Rizzoli, \$45.00

Every now and then, a book arrives which is not just a handsome presentation of information, but also a completely satisfying aesthetic object. This is the case with *Handcrafted Modern* by Leslie Williamson. Her photographs inside designers' (mostly) midcentury modernist homes capture something of the inhabitant and his or her pattern of living. But they reveal something more—something of the life of the designer of the space.

Williamson created the book because she couldn't find anything like it in the basement of San Francisco's William Stout Books, where she used to buy design titles. She tracked leads to all kinds of modernist designers, but time and expense limited her to only U.S. projects. Fairly early in the process, she decided that she would include houses that were either currently lived in by the designer or kept the way the designer left them when alive. A few of the houses have been well documented over the last several decades, like the Eames and Gropius residences, but whether the house already has a public life or not, Williamson's thoughtful yet informal style captures something fresh.

Even the Eames house, one of the most modern and best known of the residences in the book, acquired a handcrafted quality after

Charles and Ray Eames were done filling it with their collections. I have never seen an image of their nightstand (with Ray's bobby pins visible) or a close-up of the bookshelf. Meanwhile, several names in the book were new to me, like the unusual works of sculptor J.B. Blunk and woodworker and metal-smith John Kapel. Blunk's sensuous sculptures fit well in his rough-hewn Inverness cottage, while Kappel, a furniture designer, uses wood to tailor a precise house in Woodside. Williamson also discovered Irving Harper before *The New York Times* brought his colorful and whimsical paper sculptures to light. Danish American furniture designer Jens Risom's house appealed deeply to me, while Eva Zeisel's antique-laden public rooms were a complete surprise. Rather than shooting starch-sharp magazine images where all of the objects have been rearranged, Williamson records the rooms as she finds them, with minimal disruption.

This is not a decorator's book. It is a storyteller's book, one for people who want to look deeper into the lives of 20th-century designers and then travel vicariously with the photographer as she describes her visits. The linen cover and the layout complement the photographs, while Williamson's personal text adds another **continued on page 15**

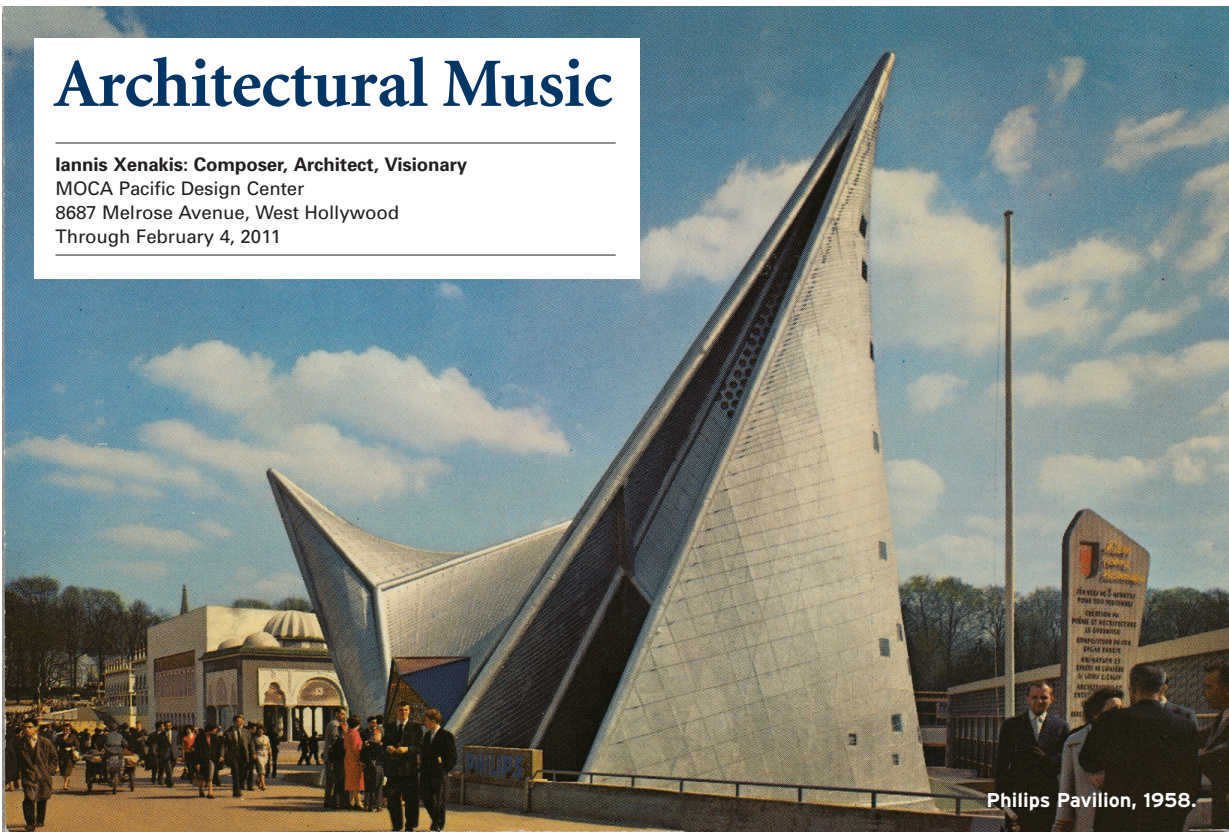


Inside Wharton Esherick's home in Valley Forge, PA.

LESIE WILLIAMSON

Architectural Music

Iannis Xenakis: Composer, Architect, Visionary
MOCA Pacific Design Center
8687 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood
Through February 4, 2011



Philips Pavilion, 1958.

Born in Romania to Greek parents, Iannis Xenakis (1922–2001) was a Resistance hero in World War II, an engineer who realized two of Le Corbusier's most audacious designs, and a composer who derived complex scores from abstruse mathematical data. As if that weren't enough, he was also a visionary architect who designed an extraordinary house for San Diego composer Roger Reynolds that may one day be built. Sketches and models of Xenakis' work, along with recordings and film interviews, tell the story of this fascinating career in a new exhibition at MOCA Pacific Design Center.

The revelation of the show is a model of the house, commissioned by Reynolds in the 1980s, which would have been Xenakis' only built work in North America. Its organic plan, undulating like an exotic flower, is radically

different from the hyperbolic paraboloids of the Philips Pavilion for Brussels' 1958 Expo, the short-lived structure that brought him fame. Le Corbusier claimed sole credit for that (as he did for everything that emerged from his office), but Xenakis worked it up from a thumbnail sketch and amplified the ideas in his later designs. These include an unsuccessful entry for the Cité de La Musique competition in Paris, and a visionary mile-high city of revolving hyperboloids, each intended to house five million people. The Reynolds house would have brought his soaring invention back to earth, but soil tests revealed a fault line beneath the site in Borrego Springs, California, and Xenakis' health failed in the last decade of his life. With luck, the Reynolds will find another site and another architect to flesh out the plan. **continued on page 15**

COURTESY IANNIS XENAKIS ARCHIVES



LESLIE WILLIAMSON

Russel Wright's textured living space.

INSIDE STORY continued from page 14 layer of insight. There are no formal portraits of the inhabitants: The portrait is found in the space.

Williamson is not afraid to share her stumbles or disappointments. As she writes in her introduction, "Perfection is supremely uninteresting to me." She regrets that she didn't get around to shooting Ise Gropius' cookbook with notations on how "Gropi" liked his duck à l'orange prepared. She tells the story of the towel with his inked name hanging in the bathroom: "He was no longer an icon of Modernism. He was a guy worried about losing his towel."

Simply organized, each entry opens with an image across a single page or a double spread followed by the photographer's story of shooting the space, along with more photos. The graphic design is subtle: The title page for each entry looks like a keyhole—a special look inside. There are no captions, just the experience of the space.

As so much design information moves online, Williamson's contribution makes a strong argument for the value of books. The photos are not perfectly lit (she only used available light) or parallax corrected. Williamson shot with a medium-format camera and film. The result is richer than digital, and it is deeply satisfying to look at an image, read an entry, and then return to the image. Although she took over 200 photographs for each residence, the editing process reduced the number to around a dozen per entry. (She has been posting some of the outtakes on her website.) But this complete experience of a book—its vision, execution, editing, and design—cannot be replicated on the screen. Now that Williamson has established her reputation as a multitiered cultural and design observer, we can look forward to future books featuring even more obscure houses, and perhaps some international ones, too.

KENNETH CALDWELL IS A SAN FRANCISCO-BASED WRITER AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT.

ARCHITECTURAL MUSIC
continued from page 14

Xenakis' chief passion was his music, which as exhibition curators Sharon Kanach and Carey Lovelace explain, "moved away from traditional polyphony to create masses of sound, shifting abstract aural gestures, linear permutation, and sonic pointillism." His scores have an architectural quality on the page and in performance, and he composed one short piece to welcome visitors to the Philips Pavilion. Several events in connection with the exhibition offer a fuller experience of Xenakis' soundscapes. His *Polytope de Persepolis*, a multimedia extravaganza mounted in Iran before it fell to the mullahs, was recreated in the Los Angeles State Historic Park in mid-November. Still to come in January is a showing of documentary films about Xenakis at MOCA and three nights of the composer's work at the Redcat Theater of CalArts in downtown LA. For any cerebral architect who is over Baudrillard and chaos theory, the percussive scores of Xenakis should provide a jolt of inspiration.

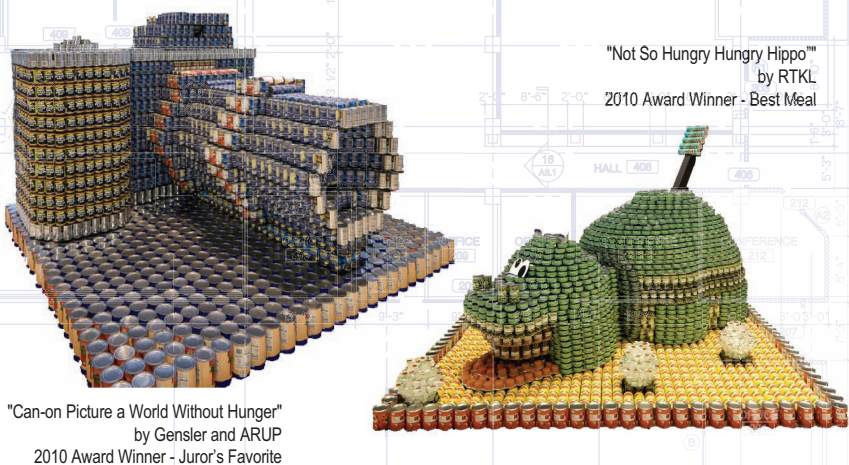
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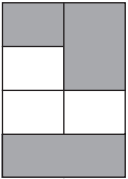
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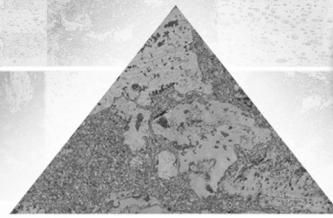
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The Cargill-owned Saltworks site.

properties behind them—including Redwood Shores—from sea-level rise. (Marshlands mitigate the rise both by working against climate change and tempering its effects.) The San Francisco Bay and Delta are under constant development pressure. Both are vast and critical elements in the region's ecology. Like the Pacific Coast north and south of San Francisco, they need to be protected.

While you can't blame Cargill for trying, developing on Bay frontage feels like sprawl. Calthorpe's rationale—NIMBY made me do it!—sidesteps a bigger problem. The uphill battle to add density to Bay Area cities reflects widespread reservations about the smart-growth formula, especially when it's imposed without any real sensitivity or imagination.

Smart growth emerged in parallel with regional efforts to halt and reverse the erosion of open space. Higher-density development, especially in transit corridors, went hand in hand with these efforts. It's true that the higher-density goal isn't universally accepted, but the resistance to it may reflect community displeasure with what's typically on offer. With its diagrammatic mix of housing and office buildings, Saltworks is another instance of a formula that, like modernism in the 1970s, has just about run its course. Most of us won't have to look at it, but that doesn't make it right.

Calthorpe, no inconsequential figure, should be taking the lead in getting smart growth out of its current impasse. Such urbanity as the Bay Area possesses reflects earlier generations' respect for what exists. There's no agreement yet on how to best accommodate future growth, but there are built examples across the region that suggest fruitful and nuanced new directions. For example, San Francisco's Mission Street corridor, which has added density incrementally while improving the quality of life on the street, shows how the Peninsula could build around its CalTrain stations. The mistakes we've made in the past with higher-density development in the Bay Area have involved overreaching, ignoring precedent, and allowing ourselves to be lulled by "out of sight, out of mind."

Even if you accept the smart-growth formula on offer, the Cargill salt flats are the wrong location for intensive development. This isn't 1990. In 2010, a bay-fill project that looks toward midcentury has a problem. Smart it's not, and the adults in the room should put a halt to it.

JOHN PARMAN IS A BERKELEY-BASED WRITER.

DESPITE CLAIMS TO THE CONTRARY, CARGILL'S SALTWORKS DEVELOPMENT IS NOT SMART GROWTH

HIGH NOON IN REDWOOD CITY

"Are there dumber places to build?" asked David Lewis, executive director of Oakland's Save the Bay. "Possibly, but a project on this site can't be considered smart growth or transit-oriented development." Stewart was talking about Saltworks, the Bay Area's latest smart-growth battle.

The project is backed by agribusiness giant Cargill and LA developer DMB. Its lead planner is smart growth's founding father, Peter Calthorpe. The team is proposing to reclaim Cargill's remaining 1,435 acres of salt flats to create an arc-shaped building site on the bay side of Redwood Shores, a levee-protected bay-fill development on Redwood City's waterfront, four miles southeast of San Francisco International Airport.

Calthorpe argues that Saltworks makes perfect sense. He points to its proximity to Redwood City's CalTrain station and to Silicon Valley's need for employee housing. He typifies Cargill's salt flats as an industrial site—"a factory

without a roof"—some of which will be restored as marshlands by Cargill and DMB if they redevelop the rest. Replying to criticism that the site is vulnerable to rising sea levels, he notes that San Francisco's Mission Bay has the same problem, yet is being developed intensively. Then he plays his trump card: His critics are ignoring the NIMBY foot-dragging that's keeping the Bay Area from hitting its housing targets, he says. Developing at a high density outside existing transit corridors is therefore a necessity.

All the smart-growth boxes are ticked with these remarks, but do they really add up? In a recent letter to Redwood City, the seasoned Oakland politician Don Perata skewered Saltworks' smart-growth pretensions. "The Cargill proposal is bay fill, not infill," he wrote. "Its impact contradicts contemporary regional land use planning and is a thinly veiled deterrent to new housing in places where costly infrastructure already exists." Like Oakland,

for example, which is "leveraging sunken costs and past investments for sustainable development," Perata adds.

Save the Bay also questions if Saltworks really adds up the way Calthorpe asserts. While the plan shows transit stops, the prevailing commute pattern is heavily tipped toward cars. Indeed, one of the biggest objections to the project is the likelihood that it would dump a lot of traffic onto a road system that's already stretched and stressed. There's a "build-it-and-transit-will-come" quality to Calthorpe's Saltworks pitch that doesn't square with actual regional transit priorities.

Then there's the inconvenient matter of climate change. Redwood Shores is the product of another era's thinking. Its most recent addition, Pacific Shores, was approved more than 20 years ago. Last year, the *California Climate Adaptation Strategy* report from California's Natural Resources Agency made it clear that new development in areas

subject to sea-level rise is a really bad idea. In June, the Army Corps of Engineers also weighed in, finding that Saltworks needs a permit under the U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972. That's a big hurdle. Is Redwood City paying attention?

Here's why they should. By midcentury, rising sea levels will be an issue in the Bay. By century's end, the levees that protect Redwood Shores could take on Dutch proportions. The Bay Area Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) is taking a hard look at growth on bay-front properties. Still neutral on Saltworks, BCDC's Will Travis at least acknowledges the dilemma: If you develop here, you saddle local and probably regional government with a big and expensive problem down the road.

The other opportunity is to restore the nearby Bay marshlands, much like what's happening with Cargill's similarly large salt-flats tract in Napa. Doing so is one way to protect low-lying

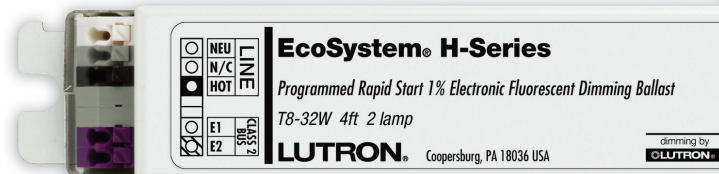
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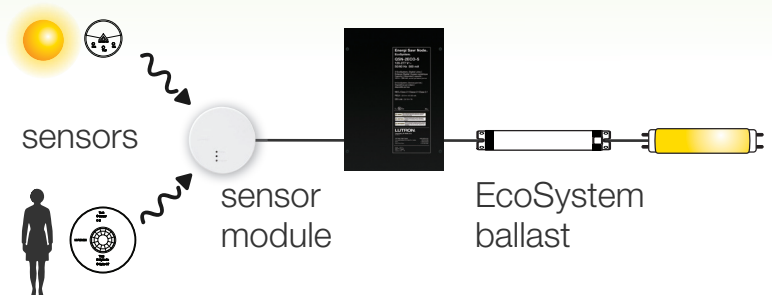


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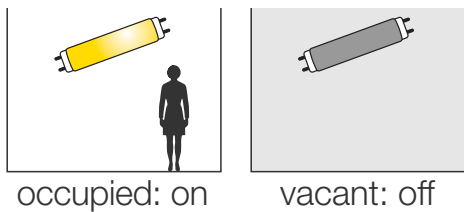
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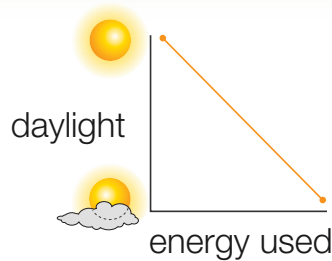
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